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Review of Harriette Andreadis, Sappho in Early Modern England: Female Same-Sex Literary Erotics 1550-1714

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political situations in which feminists have used various kinds of female "goodness" to counter scholarship that omits or trivializes women's writing. He might have distinguished more carefully between work by scholars of the early modern period and books such as *The Norton Anthology of Writing by Women*, edited by people whose judgments about women's literary history are often very different from ideas articulated by specialists in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century British women. In short, a somewhat more hospitable treatment of feminists' work might have gained a wider and more enthusiastic audience for this otherwise excellent book, which makes many important contributions to our collective field.

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Harriette Andreadis. *Sappho in Early Modern England: Female Same-Sex Literary Erotics 1550-1714*.

(The Chicago Series on Sexuality, History, and Society.) Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001. xiii + 254 pp. index. illus. bibl. \$45 (cl.), \$17 (pbk). ISBN: 0-226-02008-8 (cl), 0-226-02009-6 (pbk).

James Daybell, ed. *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700*.

(Early Modern Literature in History.) Houndmills and New York: Palgrave/St. Martin's Press, 2001. xiv + 213 pp. \$62. ISBN: 0-333-94579-4.

Jo Wallwork and Paul Salzman, eds. *Women Writing 1550-1750*.

(Meridian, The La Trobe University English Review, 18.1.) Bundoora: Meridian, 2001. 255 pp. \$20. ISBN: 0-9578971-0-3.

Each of these books breaks new, fertile ground in the study of early modern women. New methodologies, new cultural contexts, revisionist readings of earlier scholarship, rereadings of familiar texts, and new attention to lesser known texts distinguish all three volumes.

From the beginning of her illuminating study, *Sappho in Early Modern England: Female Same-Sex Literary Erotics 1550-1714*, Harriette Andreadis insists that simply applying modern assumptions about lesbian erotics to early modern women will not work. Agreeing with previous scholars that the establishment of binary heterosexual and homosexual identities did not occur until the eighteenth century, Andreadis points to the seventeenth century as essential ground for understanding the making of that modern ideology of sexuality. But, she maintains, naming female same-sex desire, relationships, and practices in historically accurate terms is problematic, not the least because seventeenth-century women themselves often participated in the "unnaming" of same-sex relations as they increasingly became identified as transgressive. Hoping to read silences and ellipses as well as the words on the page, Andreadis traces the development of "Sapphic discourse." In the place of honor is Katherine Philips, whose poetry of female friendship has long been a critical battleground of opposing views about the corporeality of same-sex erotics. Andreadis attributes to Philips the establishment and acceptance of a female poetic voice

writing "apparently chaste language of passionate female friendship whose veiled and shadowed subtext is inescapably erotic" (56); and she unequivocally believes that Philips is writing from her own experience, revising Donne's images and arguments as well as the available language of male friendship to invent a publicly acceptable discourse expressing her own passion for women. From Philips' solution to the problem of creating social respectability for homoerotic poetry emanates a tradition of what Andreadis calls "double discourse," increasingly useful to female poets the more socially transgressive Sappho becomes. Tracing Philips' influence on their poetic strategies, Andreadis outlines a historical process in which female erotic discourse develops, whether expressed in the highly allusive, veiled images of Anne Killigrew, the avowedly "inoffensive" poems of Anne Finch, or the evasive and ingenious pastoral of Jane Barker. Significant contexts for this development are offered in two key historical chapters on cultural representations of Sappho and Calisto: in chapter two, Andreadis analyzes images and a variety of texts to demonstrate Sappho's eventual preeminence as the "primary icon and embodiment of transgression" (51); and in chapter five, she demonstrates the sexually ambiguous reworking of Ovid's Calisto narrative to include female same-sex erotics.

Scholars of early modern women's writing will certainly want to read Andreadis' comprehensive study, one that fills an obvious gap in seventeenth-century literary history. Anyone who has taught Katherine Philips' friendship poems or Margaret Cavendish's *Convent of Pleasure* will find that many of the questions that arise for modern readers of these texts are the very questions that Andreadis confronts, theorizes, and offers to answer. On fundamental problems of terminology — *is it accurate to use "lesbian" in the seventeenth century?* — Andreadis is helpful, not doctrinaire, and painstakingly precise. Even if readers hesitate to agree with some of her claims — for instance, that the *absence* of poems about husband or children necessarily signifies in assessing what matters to a poet — by and large, the book instructs and illuminates, and will certainly stimulate further discussion.

The two collections of essays under review emerged from conferences that reflect the benefits of international collaboration. *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700* is an outstanding anthology in which every essay offers substantial analysis of and insight into a remarkable body of documents. Taken together, these essays provide compelling evidence for early modern women's participation in a wide range of social, political, and cultural roles; they make incontrovertible women's presence in the public sphere as part of extended family groups, communities, and national networks. Indeed, this volume adds to a growing scholarship on women's letters that indicates why they are something of a new frontier for exploring women's daily lives. In his introduction, James Daybell estimates that there are 10,000 items of women's correspondence to 1642, and in his own fine essay, "Female Literacy and the Social Conventions of Women's Letter-Writing in England, 1540-1603," he estimates that in the period he studies, there are 2300 letters extant. Daybell raises knotty issues surrounding women's correspondence, such as the significance of dictated letters and the attendant

question of female literacy. But he judiciously complicates the simple evidence of signatures by examining the multiple reasons why a woman might use a secretary in some cases and write letters herself in another. In other words, beyond orthography and penmanship lie the familial, social, and political functions of women's letters that are of central concern in this volume. Each essay provides a framework or a context for understanding aspects of the letters, and in most cases, the union of historical and literary methodologies is fruitful and instructive. As Rosemary O'Day reminds us, we need to be alert to the varying historical contexts shaping the conventions of correspondence that individual letter writers obey or revise. Examples of successful interdisciplinary analysis abound, from Roger Dalrymple's examination of "Reaction, Consolation and Redress in the Letters of the Paston Women," where genre is a crucial determinant of expression; to Alison Truelove's "Commanding Communications: the Fifteenth-Century Letters of the Stonor Women," where class and status are more likely to influence content and style. Similarly, Anne Laurence introduces a remarkable group of early eighteenth-century letters by women who essentially adopted the role of Civil War historians.

Letters as evidence of women's multiple roles both early and late in the period comes from Jennifer Ward's "Letter-Writing by English Noblewomen in the Early Fifteenth Century," in which women's involvement in estate management and patronage is documented, and from Jacqueline Eales' "Patriarchy, Puritanism and Politics: the Letters of Lady Brilliana Harley (1598-1643)" where Harley's active participation in local politics and in running family affairs is examined. Rosemary O'Day's enlightening "Tudor and Stuart Women: their Lives through their Letters" shows not only that women participate in arranging their children's marriages, but also that young women correspond about their own marriages. The importance of women's contributions to maintaining the elite status of their family appears in Vivienne Larminie's "Fighting for Family in a Patronage Society: the Epistolary Armoury of Anne Newdigate (1574-1618)," where Larminie demonstrates how Newdigate expresses herself "forcefully, eloquently and persuasively" (94). In a quite different way, the writer's political agenda is part of Sara Jayne Steen's "'How Subject to Interpretation': Lady Arbella Stuart and the Reading of Illness," where Steen's detective work leads to her conclusion that Stuart was probably afflicted with acute intermittent porphyria, an illness that her letters document but also exploit for political and psychological reasons. Even cloistered nuns, Claire Walker argues in "'Doe not suppose me a well mortified Nun dead to the world': Letter Writing in Early Modern English Convents," exerted considerable influence on patronage decisions, disseminated family news, and conducted financial affairs.

The pleasures of eavesdropping on the correspondents' lives should not be ignored, perhaps most notably in the Thynne correspondence discussed in Alison Wall's "Deference and Defiance in Women's Letters of the Thynne Family: the Rhetoric of Relationships." Wall argues that some letters indicate how the proscriptions of preachers and didactic texts are received by women themselves, something about which we certainly need to know more. In Maria Thynne's irony,

we may hear a delightful comeback to those endless injunctions to obedience and silence: she suggests that her two letters a day to her husband, Thomas, might indicate that she prattles, "but consider that all is business, for . . . there is not a more silent woman living than myself" (79). Similarly, in "Gentle Companions: Single Women and their Letters in Late Stuart England," Susan Whyman provides notable profiles of women like Peg Adams who wrote to her Verney kin, ". . . and as for anybody falling in love with me, I can't expect that [having] . . . none of that which all the world values; I mean money" (183).

In *Women Writing 1550-1750*, women's participation in public discourse and the means by which they undertake and authorize it are similarly of fundamental concern. In "Redemptive Advice: Dorothy Leigh's *The Mother's Blessing*," Lloyd Davis makes an excellent case for Leigh's assumption of a public role through her redefinition of maternal duty. Similarly, Patricia Pender's "Disciplining the Imperial Mother: Anne Bradstreet's *A Dialogue Between Old England and New*" demonstrates that Bradstreet uses domestic discourse between mother and daughter to enable her entry into public, political disputation. Two essays on Margaret Cavendish — Jo Wallwork's "Old Worlds and New: Margaret Cavendish's Response to Robert Hooke's *Micrographia*" and Diana Barnes' "The Restoration of Royalist Form in Margaret Cavendish's *Sociable Letters*" — effectively argue for Cavendish's place in public debate about experimental science and politics, adding to the overwhelming evidence that moves Cavendish well out of private eccentricity and into the mainstream.

A number of essays provide salutary critiques and revisions of current methodology, cautioning us not simply to limit contexts for women's writing to women's literary history or — following early work by Margaret Ferguson and Margaret Ezell — to assume that recovering women's texts can ignore the circumstances of their transmission. In "Recovering Early Modern Women's Writing," Elaine Hobby argues from the evidence of *The Midwives Book* that Jane Sharp revises contemporary midwifery manuals; thus, women's texts must be situated generically within a wide range of early modern texts authored by both men and women. Susan Wiseman demonstrates in "'The most considerable of my troubles': Anne Halkett and the Writing of Civil War Conspiracy" that determined editing of Halkett's texts erased their politics and reinvented Halkett's character and behavior. And in "'Divine Chymistry' and Dramatic Character: The Lives of Lady Anne Halkett," Kim Walker argues convincingly that Halkett's autobiographical self should be read intertextually with the heroines of Caroline drama, particularly Fletcher's plays. Similarly, in "Tixall Revisited: The Coterie Writings of the Astons and the Thimelbys in Seventeenth-Century Staffordshire," Julie Sanders claims that the letters are more profitably read in the context of family relations and history rather than simply as the work of women writers. In "'Dear Object': Katherine Philips' Love Elegies and Their Readers," Kate Lilley explains clearly why radically different readings of Philips' erotic writing are possible, and explores the significance of hostile reception by her contemporaries.

One potential problem with an anthology developed from conference papers is that the essays sometimes seem too short and undeveloped. Such brevity is more of an issue in *Women Writing 1550-1750* than in *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing*; however, it does not seriously detract from the real advantage of both anthologies, that in one volume readers gain access to an enormous amount of scholarship about early modern women, both in the valuable endnotes and in the ambitious arguments of the authors.

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Susanne Scholz. *Body Narratives: Writing the Nation and Fashioning the Subject in Early Modern England*.

Houndmills and New York: Palgrave/St. Martin's Press, 2000. ix + 208 pp. index. bibl. \$59.95. ISBN: 0-312-22783-3.

This book engages a number of topics that have preoccupied early modern studies for the past two decades (the body, gender, subjectivity, emergent nationality, early colonialism). Scholz's central purpose is to explore the nature of corporeality in Elizabethan England, and in the first three chapters she examines how the body intersects with or produces subjectivity. She considers how self-government is installed and cultivated within the subject (Norbert Elias, Erasmus, Spenser), how courtesy books (*The Courtier*, *The Faerie Queene*) produce courtly behavior, and how the female body is sexualized (Petrarchan discourses). In the second half of the book, Scholz looks at the way the somatic infiltrates and shapes political processes. The representation of the nation's body as an impregnable fortress forms the topic of one chapter, the symbolic body of Queen Elizabeth is the subject of another, and the final two chapters focus respectively on Astraea, Ireland, and the body politic and on the body of the Other in Raleigh's *Discoverie*. Not surprisingly, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is the central text, and such works as Lyly's *Endimion*, the courtly entertainment, *The Four Foster Children of Desire* (which Sidney may have helped create), Raleigh's *Discoverie*, and Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland* figure as planets orbiting around it.

Scholz's view is that the body is fundamentally historical. Although different cultures and historical periods produce the illusion of a prediscursive, naturalized body, she argues that attending to the way cultures "produce" bodies will allow us to understand historical change. Scholz's conception of corporeality is, of course, recognizably Foucauldian, though strongly mediated by Judith Butler's performative model and by the more diffuse influence of new historicism. The book's theoretical matrix is a deft but predictable fusion of recent ideas circulating in early modern studies and postcolonial theory, and while Scholz brings a range of issues together in often intelligent ways, she relies too frequently on the formative perceptions of scholars reading the primary material rather than interrogating those received ideas or grappling with the primary material in new ways. Thomas Laqueur becomes the